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**PRESS RELEASE**

**JOINT FEDERAL INVESTIGATION NETS DOZENS OF ARRESTS ON  
SALE AND USE OF FRAUDULENT IDENTITY DOCUMENTS**

Colm F. Connolly, United States Attorney for the District of Delaware, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) today announced the initial arrests resulting from a year-long investigation into the illegal sale and use of valid Puerto Rican birth certificates and Social Security cards in Delaware.

The joint investigation targeted several vendors/brokers who transported various identity documents from Puerto Rico to the lower Delaware Hispanic community. According to indictments returned by a federal Grand Jury last week, these documents were ultimately used to satisfy documentary requirements of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) as it relates to employment. Moreover, once in receipt of these documents, individuals could fraudulently obtain all the rights and privileges of a U.S. citizen, including gaining employment, voting, purchasing firearms and obtaining valid passports to access U.S. borders.

As a result of the investigation to date, three individuals have been indicted, a fourth individual has been arrested on a criminal complaint, and another twenty-seven (27) individuals have been arrested on administrative immigration charges.<sup>1</sup> As the scope of this investigation is large and

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<sup>1</sup> An indictment is only an accusation. A defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty.

ongoing, additional arrests are expected. On November 6, 2007, the federal Grand Jury sitting in Wilmington returned indictments charging Joan Santiago, of Blades, Delaware; Oscar Laines, of Selbyville, Delaware; and Hugo Lopez-Olguin, of Seaford, Delaware; each with identity theft and the unlawful transfer of Social Security cards and birth certificates. According to the indictments, these three defendants collectively bought and/or sold approximately 129 Social Security cards and birth certificates. The charges against the defendants carry maximum penalties of 12 years incarceration. Earlier today, Julio Gonzales of Georgetown, Delaware, was arrested on a criminal complaint also charging him with identity theft, unlawful transfer of Social Security cards, and forging a Lawful Permanent Resident card. These charges carry a maximum penalty of 30 years imprisonment.

“This investigation was initiated to eliminate the vulnerability to our national security and to the employment verification system by disrupting and dismantling the brokers’/vendors’ operations,” said John P. Kelleghan, the Special Agent in Charge of regional ICE Office of Investigations activities. William Lowder, the Resident Agent in Charge of ICE’s Office of Investigations in Delaware, added that “All the known employers affected by the presentation of these documents are cooperating with the ongoing investigation. It should now be clear that if individuals fraudulently present these types of documents to gain employment in Delaware, they subject themselves to future arrest and/or prosecution.”

Teresa L. Thome, Inspector in Charge of the U. S. Postal Inspection Service, Philadelphia Division stated “Through this joint effort the U. S. Postal Inspection Service serves notice that the U. S. Mails will not be used to facilitate identity theft in any manner.”

U.S. Attorney Connolly noted that because of the multitude of false names and the complexity of tracking the sale of identity documents, identity theft cases are difficult to investigate,

and he commended the United States Postal Inspection Service and United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement for their efforts in successfully investigating the various cases. U.S. Attorney Connolly also thanked the numerous state and local police departments that assisted in the investigation, including the Delaware State Police and the Milford, Seaford, Georgetown and Selbyville Police Departments.

For further information, contact United States Attorney Colm F. Connolly.

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